

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**SHAPING COMMITMENT:  
RESOLVING CANADA'S STRATEGY GAP IN AFGHANISTAN AND BEYOND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Release of Canada's first ever National Security Policy (NSP) in 2004, followed by the International (Foreign) Policy Statement and Defence Policy Review in 2005, have publicly articulated Canada's principal security interests for the post-9/11 world. Nevertheless, the realities of Canada's present engagement in Afghanistan have highlighted a gap between stated national security and foreign policy goals, and the Canadian military, diplomatic and development effort in theater. National interests and values, articulated within the NSP and the International Policy Statement, are insufficient to frame the context for such a complex endeavor. Only a clearly defined strategy, based upon rigorous analysis of ends, ways and means, and assessment of risk, can enable informed national and political debate, provide the required guidance for campaign planning amongst government departments, and determine Canada's preferred stake in the wider international arena, and the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) effort overall. Recommendations are provided with respect to resolving Canada's strategy gap, in both the immediate and longer term.



## SHAPING COMMITMENT: RESOLVING CANADA'S STRATEGY GAP IN AFGHANISTAN AND BEYOND

The only real guide to the actions of mighty nations and powerful governments is a correct estimate of what they are and what they consider to be in their own interests.

—Winston Churchill

### A Renewal of National Purpose

These uncertain times may well agree with Canada, although there are undoubtedly many Canadians who would not rush to concur. Given the ambiguous nature of the post-9/11 world, few states, less those with a darker agenda, would choose to regard contemporary global affairs with any true sense of optimism. A full five years on from the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington the consequences of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) continue to unfold in ways unanticipated at the outset, certainly from the United States' (US) perspective and those of other Western allies, with one of the few concrete strategic insights to date being an acknowledgement as to the limitations of Western military intervention.<sup>1</sup> Concurrently, so too has the pace of globalization continued on unabated, relentlessly rearranging global patterns of information, wealth and ideas, and creating in its wake stark disparities in global economic and social conditions. The significance of this state in world affairs lies somewhere between the defining views of those who urge an "understanding of the system [globalization] and its moving parts"<sup>2</sup> for the mutual benefit of as many as possible, and those of more ominous hue; "[w]e live in a seething, discontented world, and we ignore that fact at our peril."<sup>3</sup> To the extent that the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be characterized at this early stage, it is unfolding as an age where opportunity and instability go hand in hand, a challenging terrain by any measure.

Yet for Canada, the past five years provided a very real and timely incentive to take full notice of this shifting world order, speculate as to the immediate and longer term consequences, and perhaps for the first time in a generation, reconsider the country's position relative to the forces behind this shaping of global affairs. This opportunity presented itself through a combination of emerging national imperatives. First, there is a growing acceptance that a foreign policy based solely upon the merits of 'soft power'<sup>4</sup> is wholly unsuited to present conditions. Much has changed so quickly that the emphasis on this particular brand of 'Canadian Internationalism'<sup>5</sup> of a short decade ago seems not only completely out of sync, but dangerously naive.<sup>6</sup> What ought to have been made clear enough from the early 1990's debacles in Somalia and Rwanda, has been repeated so frequently, and with such similar graphic consequences, that the majority of Canadians have hardened their world outlook and

are now willing to commit their military forces into failed states or situations of systematic human rights violations, "even if Canada has no direct interest and no Canadians are at risk."<sup>7</sup>

The second imperative is consistently the most vital of all Canada's national interests; the management of its relationship with the United States. While this has always been subject to the conditions of continuous change, rarely if ever has this had to contend with a more anxious and complicated period in America's own affairs. No nation, and certainly not one as tightly bound to the US by shared ideals, values and geography as Canada, could hope to remain immune to, and unaffected by, the reaction of America to the tragedy of September 2001. In the ensuing aftermath, bilateral relations have often been subject to strain.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the ultimate acceptance by the Canadian public and private sector that Canada/US affairs can no longer be regarded as simply a matter of "business as usual," has steered the Government of Canada, albeit sporadically, toward an increasingly pragmatic interpretation of this most critical relationship.<sup>9</sup>

Third, the early years of this decade brought with them serious and growing concern amongst many Canadians that, for a variety of reasons, Canada was failing to live up to the promise of earlier times and had 'lost its place' in the world. In the words of award-winning journalist and academic Andrew Cohen, "[Canada] is not doing what it once did, or as much as it once did, or enjoying the success it once did."<sup>10</sup> Such grave introspection, at an equally troubling time in international affairs, registered upon the Canadian political conscience with sufficient impact to promote a coherent attempt at reversing the trend. Following on the release of Canada's first ever National Security Policy (NSP) in April 2004, which articulated clearly the country's core national security interests,<sup>11</sup> the government of the then (Liberal) Prime Minister Paul Martin published a comprehensive review of Canada's International (Foreign) Policy and Defence Policy<sup>12</sup> in April 2005, aimed at re-defining Canada's role in the international order and re-invigorating Canadian influence abroad. In many important respects, this 'policy triumvirate' served formal notice that Canada acknowledged the shifting nature of the 21st century global landscape, understood the areas of national deficiency and neglect that demanded attention, and for the first time in recent history, charted the direction for an autonomous course in international affairs.

### Vision and Leadership

Perhaps the principal benefit of this evolving attempt to come to grips with the post-9/11 world has been to force the near-dormant issue of strategic leadership back onto Canada's national agenda after a lengthy hiatus. Indeed, an increasing focus on this central issue,

strategic leadership for the nation and equally by the nation, may be best regarded as the critical consequence of the changed circumstances under which Canada perceives itself, both within North America and the wider world.<sup>13</sup>

Growing recognition of the vital importance of strategic leadership, proclaimed initially by a select few national political commentators, has continued to gain traction within the Canadian political arena. Some of the hard lessons of Canadian history, never a favorite staple of the national diet, are again serving to reinforce the value of decisiveness and conviction in the face of stark strategic choices. The phenomenon was acknowledged, although not always subscribed to, during the brief mandate of Prime Minister Paul Martin, and more recently has emerged as a central tenet of the current Conservative government platform of Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

...[the] objective is to make Canada the leader on the international stage...in a shrinking, changing, dangerous world, our government must play a role in the world. And I believe that Canadians want a significant role - a clear, confident and influential role. As proud citizens, they don't want a Canada that just goes along; they want a Canada that leads. They want a Canada that doesn't just criticize, but one that can contribute. They want a Canada that reflects their values and interests, and that punches above its weight...<sup>14</sup>

Stirring stuff to be sure, but is a public pronouncement of strong strategic leadership sufficient? Canada's leading role appearances on the world stage have arguably been very few and far between, and Canadians as a whole, seem evenly split on the virtues of the spotlight vice the anonymity of the supporting cast.<sup>15</sup> For a nation lodged for well over a century within the close orbit of two successive hegemonic powers, it is questionable whether Canada has ever really had the requirement to do other than react or conform to the gravitational pull of these larger spheres of influence. By what guiding principles, therefore, should this most recent exercise of strategic leadership be likely to succeed?

In the first instance, much may be said for the old military adage of 'selection and maintenance of the aim.' Former Canadian Ambassador to The United States, Derek Burney, puts it quite succinctly; "clear political direction and conviction are imperatives for effective leadership on both domestic and foreign-policy."<sup>16</sup> In his turn, Prime Minister Harper appears to have seized upon this message in gauging both the gravity of his tone and focus of his remarks during his address to the United Nations General Assembly<sup>17</sup> and thereafter to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Awards Dinner<sup>18</sup> in September and October 2006 respectively. In each case he framed the context of his subject around the core national interests and values articulated within the national security, foreign and defence policy triumvirate, reinforcing Canada's intended course in world affairs.<sup>19</sup>

This degree of consistency in the public messages emanating from Canada's political leadership,<sup>20</sup> while beginning to resonate with informed audiences at home and abroad,<sup>21</sup> also gained assistance from the 'debunking' of selected myths that grew prominent in the 1990s. Chief among these was Canada's exclusive hold on peacekeeping as the preferred role for its military forces, reinforcing the 'soft power' orientation of Canadian foreign-policy of that period. While the clear articulation of military roles and missions defined in both the International Policy Statement 2005 and its Defence counterpart put a formal end to any suggestion of a peacekeeping raison d'être for Canada's military, it is the evolution of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, the international role where Canadian "...security interests...values and capabilities come squarely together"<sup>22</sup> that has utterly shattered the myth of Canada as benign peacekeeper in the minds of domestic and international audiences alike.<sup>23</sup> And in this role Canada has found itself assuming greater international leadership responsibilities than ever envisioned, demanding a greater capacity for practice of strategic leadership by its political leaders than ever imagined, and requiring a greater unity of effort by the Government of Canada than has been contemplated for a very long time. The question stands therefore, as to the efficiency by which Canada is managing this complex challenge and the effectiveness with which Canada's national interests, values and capabilities are, indeed, coming 'squarely together.' On balance, the answer must be that, while the foundation has been laid, there are specific lessons to be learned and further room for improvement if the country is intent on reviving its reputation as an international leader and recovering its place in the world.

### The Strategy Gap

Canada's mission in Afghanistan is by definition its "biggest and most important overseas engagement"<sup>24</sup> and by the measure of such things, the country's first war of this uncertain century. As such, and considering the stakes involved, it provides in every respect a most relevant and telling backdrop to the broader strategic issues that confront any nation desiring to meet its potential on the international stage.

As a chosen venue for such an expression of national purpose, Afghanistan is definitely the deep end of the pool. It is a huge undertaking; a complex problem with a long history of foreign intervention and decidedly mixed results. Geographically and culturally isolated, it is hard to reach both in the practical and social sense. Supporting any level of activity under such remote conditions is complicated, expensive and an intensely risky business. On the other hand, as the archetypal 'failed state', Afghanistan answers to Canada's core national interests and values, including national security, international stability and the legitimacy of humanitarian



law, to include an 'international collective responsibility to protect' (R2P) against prospective humanitarian disasters.<sup>25</sup>

In essence, Canada's engagement in Afghanistan may be seen as a combination of a compelling security challenge, a just humanitarian cause, an expression of higher national purpose supported by a strengthening level of national strategic leadership, all at play within the complex 21st century strategic environment. Understandably, the true test for Canada is connecting these various dots so as to best assure the desired objectives. But in this regard it is equally clear that a strategy gap threatens that critical outcome.

In this particular respect, the term strategy gap suggests a dissonance between the range of actions undertaken by Canada in Afghanistan, and the overarching policy direction and guidance promulgated by national leadership at home. The effect realized has been a strategy vacuum that has perpetuated a 'reactive' posture to actions applied in theater, inhibited proactive measures in pursuit of declared ends, and prevented any real assurance that national interests have been well served or that national objectives have been met.<sup>26</sup> In fairness to the level of Canada's commitment, it must also be acknowledged that the existing strategy gap was present from the outset, arising from a hastily conceived decision to engage in Afghanistan in the first instance, coupled with the historic lack of an institutional process within Canada's governance structure necessary to assess and synchronize what has become a truly complex endeavor. It remains, nonetheless, a critical deficiency that if left unchecked, will continue to threaten the strategic coherence and operational success of Canada's present undertaking, and those others that undoubtedly lie ahead.

In a recent Op-Ed piece, Canadian historian Douglas Bland called for "a national strategy [on Afghanistan] that policy planners and military leaders can use to guide their decisions."<sup>27</sup> In doing so he identified the consequence of arriving by accident in a leading international role that was never part of Canada's original concept. If the political logic of being in Afghanistan was indeed all about not being in Iraq, the assumptions supporting that decision in 2003 may have profoundly underestimated matters then, and are completely irrelevant now. As Canadian academic Roy Huebert summarizes Canada's situation three years on: "We have no strategic planning on Afghanistan. But we may just have stumbled into the right place."<sup>28</sup> The strategic dilemma in this is clear. Conditions may well have evolved in the interim to the point where a renewed sense of Canadian national purpose and decisive strategic leadership correspond and do justice to the many complexities and levels of risk on the ground, but how to connect past effort with emerging policy and future objectives? In military parlance it is the unenviable 'reverse estimate' process; figuring out how we got here from there, and rearranging the threads

so as to build a coherent position from which to proceed. Until this is achieved, and until the current strategy gap is closed, Canadian political leadership will continue to be confronted with the consequences, the most severe of which were much in evidence in 2006 when Canada assumed responsibility for the volatile southwestern province of Kandahar.<sup>29</sup>

Informing Canadian public opinion as to the relevance of their country's commitment to Afghanistan has been a particular challenge<sup>30</sup> and will remain so until public and political debate may be framed within a clearly defined strategic context. Steering a prudent path in foreign relations with friends and enemies alike, and managing expectations within the domestic audience, NATO alliance allies, the United Nations, and most importantly the United States, will lack consistency and cohesion unless the messages conveyed are firmly wed to strategic intent. And defining success in a complex, risk- laden engagement much as Canada has assumed, will only be possible once the strategic ends have been fully divined. Canada stands at an important crossroads in what is decidedly a bold demonstration of leadership on the world stage. But unless the strategy gap is addressed, the lasting lessons stand to be lost. The path ahead must therefore be to stay the course, reinforce success as opportunities arise, and carefully fashion a comprehensive and integrated strategic process that will better serve the nation's need both for Afghanistan and beyond.

Nations that aspire to 'punch above their weight' must also know where to hit, how often, and to what desired effect. If Canada's evolving Afghan experience is providing any such insight, it must be the paramount requirement to connect national purpose, vision and interests with national actions and efforts in the most effective, coherent and farsighted manner possible. This is vital in the contemporary strategic environment, the ambiguous nature of which would suggest that national interests are best served through the integration of national efforts towards mutually supporting national objectives. While this would appear simple enough to achieve, it requires institutional discipline and foresight in practice. To date, Canada's record in Afghanistan reveals that while it grasps the concept, and has taken preliminary steps toward this outcome, it has far to go and much to do before Canadian strategic leadership is fully buttressed by the well harnessed and clearly focused capacities of the state. How then to realize the improvements necessary? Canada could do worse than to better recognize and enhance the principal animators of national purpose, thereby encouraging and sustaining a deliberate process of national strategy development as a result.

## Shaping Commitment

### National Interests and Strategic Vision

In a recent speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center entitled *Reviving Canadian Leadership in the World*, Prime Minister Harper offered his strategic vision for Canada;

...[t]hat objective is to make Canada a leader on the international stage. We want to ensure that we can preserve our identity and our sovereignty, protect our key interests and defend those values we hold most dear on the international scene...<sup>31</sup>

In so doing, he was enhancing the theme that made a formal debut with Canada's International Policy Statement of April 2005, albeit with a little less altruism and a keener edge of national interest. This vision had also been at the heart of the PM's address to the UN General Assembly in September 2006,<sup>32</sup> wherein he chose the Afghanistan mission to illustrate this sense of national purpose in action, as an example of the extent to which Canada was now willing to commit itself in pursuit of its beliefs and ideals, and on behalf of others. This reinvigorated sense of national conviction has been greeted with respect by many, most recently at the NATO summit in Latvia,<sup>33</sup> and earned the disfavor of a few at the APEC summit in Vietnam,<sup>34</sup> but in each case the overall significance is clear; it will no longer be a deficit of strategic vision that holds Canada back from achieving its chosen objectives.

### National Policy

In his monograph *Strategic theory for the 21st century: the Little Book on Big Strategy*, Harry R. Yarger of the US Army War College differentiates between national policy and national strategy as follows:

Policy articulates the reflection of these [national] interests in the strategic environment.... Strategy is fundamentally a choice; it reflects a preference for a future state or condition in the strategic environment.<sup>35</sup>

This distinction is important in a Canadian context, where there is little traditional association with the formal architecture of state strategy development. The release of Canada's 'first ever' National Security Policy (NSP) in April 2004 is a case in point. This document, often seen as a central policy pillar in nations like the US where the comprehensiveness of strategy is well defined, was introduced by the Government of Canada in response to the significant change in the strategic environment after 9/11. As it stands, the NSP articulates Canada's core security interests and offers specific direction and guidance within key areas of national security focus.<sup>36</sup> This document also clearly served as foundation policy for the International Policy Statement and its subordinate Defence Policy Review one year later. However, the policy

preeminence of the NSP has never been recognized within the Government of Canada in any formal way, although it stands alone for the moment as a unique policy product, (the latter two being closer to strategy documents under Yarger's interpretation). The NSP is itself an important start toward the public articulation of policy by the Canadian Government but it cannot continue to stand alone if national interests are to be pursued and national objectives realized across the spectrum of the contemporary strategic environment. Much greater effort will be required in the promulgation of government policy if complex, long-term engagements like Afghanistan are to be accurately directed and supported over time.

### National Power

Holding a rational discussion on the subject of national power is difficult for Canadians, the majority of whom readily associate the term with their southern neighbor and would rarely concede its application at home. Yet by the natural and social determinants of national power,<sup>37</sup> Canada stands among a distinct minority of nations who have the capacity and capability to actually project their interests, and indeed prosecute a war, half a world away. Moreover, the elements of national power are at the heart of the '3D' (Defence, Diplomacy and Development)<sup>38</sup> or 'Whole of Government'<sup>39</sup> approach to meeting Canada's objectives in Afghanistan. This attempt to harness diplomatic, informational, military and economic capacity and capability toward a stated purpose, while long practiced in America, is relatively untried in Canada. But despite the growing pains of an obvious imbalance in the weight of effort amongst these pillars that can often distort Canada's efforts on the ground,<sup>40</sup> the concept is nevertheless indispensable for a nation seeking to realize its potential across the full spectrum of its interests.<sup>41</sup> Of more immediate importance, the union of national power (means), with a well-developed strategic concept (ways), in pursuit of a clear national objective (ends), is the fundamental trilogy in the formulation of national strategy,<sup>42</sup> critical to support of strategic leadership, and the key to addressing the strategy gap that continues to undermine the Afghanistan mission. In the future, Canada must exploit the elements of its national power in a more formal and pragmatic manner and, where necessary, adjust the organizational structures within government to best ensure its full and efficient application within the strategy formulation process.

### Institutional Maturity

The parliamentary form of democratic government is possessed of marvelous inherent flexibility, and the Canadian version is no exception. Largely unrestricted by the myriad of checks and balances which define the federal system of government in the United States,

parliamentary business of state is more often guided by convention rather than closely directed by the tenets of specific acts or laws. Indeed, as recent Canadian political history demonstrates, it is often hard to tell exactly 'where the buck stops' within the parliamentary system.<sup>43</sup> Flexibility proves an obvious advantage in the exercising of national interest, and can be particularly evident in the latitude enjoyed by Prime Ministers in their expression of strategic leadership, when they so choose. But the reverse of the medal can be a great potential for incoherence in national policy, inconsistency in the pursuit of national objectives over time, and 'ad hocery' in the development of strategic concepts and the application of national power. Within this environment, government departments and agencies, far from being compelled to adjust to routine and rigorous oversight, are more often free to interpret national policy from the perspective of their own particular brand of institutional logic. This state of affairs is hardly conducive to the genesis of a strong Interdepartmental/Agency process in coherent pursuit of national objectives, and proves particularly ineffective in an interdependent globalized world. As former DSACEUR, retired British General, Sir Rupert Smith relates in his recent book *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*;

Presently our institutions are structured like stovepipes or silos...and except in particular cases there is little interaction between them...Put another way, our institutions are structured vertically, but the events with which they now deal cut across them horizontally; this means each one is dealing only with a small part of a situation, as it is relevant to the institution, rather than inputting to the situation as a whole. We need to have the ability to bring them together...so that their actions are directed by one set of hands and are coherent. This applies to all ministries and military staffs...<sup>44</sup>

Canada stands guilty of this form of institutional immaturity and the Afghanistan mission is suffering as a result. When the security and development policy group, The SENLIS Council, released their December 2006 report: *An Assessment of the Hearts and Minds Campaign in Southern Afghanistan*,<sup>45</sup> it declared that "the British and Canadian governments and their development agencies have abandoned their troops in Afghanistan"<sup>46</sup> and further stated that "[d]ysfunctional aid and development delivery frameworks have failed to provide [a] positive environment for military actions."<sup>47</sup> From a Canadian government perspective, this is more a damning indictment of poor unity of effort at the strategic level, than it is a comment on the efficacy of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) programs in theater. And it is far from the only example to illustrate a profound imbalance in the '3D' model and structural weakness in the 'Whole of Government' approach to this mission. Even allowing for differing levels of experience and skill sets amongst the major Canadian government departments

involved with the Afghanistan engagement, the relative weight of effort applied by each, and the scale of unified action overall is evidently much less than the situation demands.<sup>48</sup>

Loose terminologies like '3D' and 'Whole of Government,' suggests an informality and lack of precision in the institutional mindset that adversely affects the aim. While there is no true Canadian government equivalent to the US National Security Council (NSC), there would certainly be merit in instituting a firm hand to drive strategy formulation and apply the necessary direction and oversight to the Interdepartmental/Agency process in Canada. This would acknowledge the fact that the federal cabinet is too large and removed a body for such a precise focus, and is nothing less than the 21st century strategic environment will continue to demand. Whereas specific ministers would certainly comprise such a council, the Privy Council Office, as the intra-governmental policy analysis and coordination hub, is the obvious choice to support it, and key departments would be required to adjust their respective structures to better act upon council direction. The Department of National Defence (DND), as the department of government with the most advanced 'planning culture,' is currently in the best position to guide the applicable Interdepartmental/Agency strategy formulation effort. The capabilities of the military Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) are central to this role. Moreover, having recently transformed to a unified command structure with operational commanders responsible for the implementation of National Military Strategy, the means now exist to turn the results of this strategy formulation process into Joint and Integrated Theater Campaign Plans, the next essential requirement, particularly in cases like Afghanistan where the employment of military power is central to the national effort.

As the Afghanistan mission continues to illustrate, and as much as it serves as a window on the future, far too much is at stake for there not to be a mature and fully accepted structure within Canada's government organization, purposely designed to support strategic leadership and national policy through stewardship and execution of the national strategic formulation process. Through the fusion of Interdepartmental/Agency action, a truly unified effort must become the future norm. As General Smith implies, 'Whole of Government' must mean exactly that: "to persist with institutional thought patterns that lead to [only] the defence ministry or department being responsible for conducting the affairs of an occupied state - as has evolved in Iraq - is folly."<sup>49</sup>

#### An Informed Public

While there is no arbitrary limit to the subject and scope of strategy that Canada might ultimately consider, it must be clearly understood to flow from national policy, and following the

example of Canada's NSP document, an authorized version of each key national strategy should be produced for public distribution. For example, five of the 'six key strategic areas' identified within the NSP; Intelligence, Emergency Planning and Management, Public Health, (Marine) Transport Security, and Border Security could and should be developed and disseminated as National Strategy documents. The sixth 'key strategic area,' International Security, is currently addressed by the Defence Policy statement – although it could and should be re-cast as the National Military Strategy. Within a democracy, the reason for this is self evident - in matters of national interest, the public gets a vote. As Robert Cooper describes in his award-winning book *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*, the principal overriding feature of diplomacy in the 21st century is the primacy of domestic influence:

Legitimacy and therefore power derives from domestic opinion, which is concerned most with policy at home. Domestic policy is about obtaining power at home; without that there is no possibility of exercising influence abroad.<sup>50</sup>

To this stage Canada's experience in Afghanistan has made one point very clear; the lack of a well articulated and publicly debated strategy has had as profound an effect on public awareness at home as it has on operations in theater. Without the articulation of national strategy on Afghanistan to inform and frame the public discourse, debate has been consigned to a vacuum, leaving domestic opinion free to be shaped for good or ill by whatever influences have predominated at the time. This is hardly the best way to engender public confidence and support in matters of national consequence, as Canadian politicians are now fully aware.<sup>51</sup> The recognized problem with public statements of policy or strategy is that they can carry with them an expectation of commitment that may ultimately prove inconvenient. However, the assumption of commitment without expectation has an unsettling quality of inconvenience all of its own. Public documents that inform domestic opinion as to national interest and strategic intent will go far to answer the question most frequently asked and most difficult to answer; why? As such, they must in future be regarded as the indispensable key to Canadian domestic support, and therefore national unity of effort, in a complex and uncertain world.

### A Lesson Learned

It has been said of the British that they acquired their empire in 'a fit of absence of mind,' and perhaps this might prove an apt description to apply to Canada regarding its mission in Afghanistan. But in truth, whether Canada has assumed its present modest mantle of international leadership and responsibility in Central Asia more by accident than design, it is at this stage beside the point. In a manner not inconsistent with its history, but uncharacteristic of

the 'soft power' orientation of its more recent past, Canada has chosen to endure considerable risk, and continues to pay the corresponding costs in blood and treasure, in order to empower a renewed expression of national purpose on the international stage. Canada is doing so to lend its capacity, capabilities and influence, along with those of other friends and allies, in a bid to confront and deter the specter of terrorism and humanitarian tragedy that threatens to become the hallmark of our times. Canada is also likely to remain engaged in this pursuit for some time to come. What then must Canadians learn from this present experience and how will it prove important for the future?

Beyond all else, Canada must strive to cast its international engagements in a proactive, rather than reactive posture, to the maximum extent possible. The strategy gap, which to this point has hobbled the country's commendable national effort and sacrifice in Afghanistan, must be fully closed, never again to compromise the realization of Canada's national interests. Purposeful expression of national vision and strategic leadership must be upheld and enabled through the deliberate formulation of national strategy in all matters of domestic and international consequence. To achieve this critical goal, Canada must adopt a more disciplined attitude toward the articulation of national policy, and confirm the institutional organization within government responsible and capable for the determination of clear national objectives - and the valid assessment of the national ways and means necessary to achieve them.

This is entirely within Canada's ability to achieve and, as the evolution of the Afghanistan engagement has demonstrated, these are no longer discretionary measures for any nation whose emerging level of ambition and commitment has led it to become a stalwart player within the NATO alliance, and a principal security guarantor of an impoverished and threatened people. A great deal is at stake in Afghanistan, and the unfolding outcome will impact Canada's interests in virtually every other area, at home and abroad.

As to the latitude of choice Canada might enjoy in any future enterprise of this scope, it seems reasonable to suggest that the die is now cast in favor of a continuing active role. Prevailing conditions within the global strategic environment have already forced Canada to re-evaluate and adjust to safeguard its values and interests, and are unlikely to become any less unpredictable in the near-term. Consequently, the pressure on countries possessed of sufficient capability to intervene where situations become intolerable or catastrophic, is bound to increase. There is, therefore, a clear sense of urgency for Canada to get its strategic house in order. International leadership is destined to remain in high demand. In the end, 'stepping up to the plate' in Afghanistan may indeed have proven easier, than ever stepping down.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Cordesman, "Winning the "War on Terrorism": A Fundamentally Different Strategy," *Middle East Policy* 13 (Fall 2006): 101 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 28 September 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), xxii.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Ingenuity Gap* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 408.

<sup>4</sup> Alan G. Stolberg, "The International System in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *USAWC Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (June 2006): 3.

<sup>5</sup> For background to the 'soft power' philosophy that governed Canadian foreign policy during the period 1996-2001, see Lloyd Axworthy, *Navigating A New World: Canada's Global Future* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> For a concise assessment of where 'soft power' orientation has left Canada in the post-9/11 world, see Joseph R. Nunez, "Canada's Global Role: A Strategic Assessment of its Military Power," *Parameters* 34 (Autumn 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, *Foreign Policy Under a Conservative Government: An Interim Report Card* (Vancouver and Toronto: Innovative Research Group, Inc., 30 October 2006), 34.

<sup>8</sup> For an insightful viewpoint of how Canada/US relations have suffered during the past decade and how they ought to be addressed, see Derek Burney, "Leadership in a New Government Environment," Remarks to Arthur Kroeger College Awards Dinner, Chateau Laurier Hotel, Ottawa, ON, 11 April 2006; available from <http://www.carleton.ca/ctpl/documents/Burney-ArthurKroegerAwardremarks-RevisedApril11-2006-pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 January 2007. For a far more comprehensive evaluation, see "American Assembly final report," *International Journal* 60, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 516.

<sup>9</sup> For example, one of the principal steps taken to reassure the US of the seriousness with which Canada viewed matters of hemispheric security, was the publication of a National Security Policy document; see Government of Canada (Privy Council Office), *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy* (Ottawa, National Library of Canada cataloguing in publication data, April 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Cohen, *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003), 22.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Canada, *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Government of Canada, *Canada's International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World; Overview*, and *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World; Defence* (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, April 2005).

<sup>13</sup> For an interesting perspective on Canada's reaction to changing circumstances post-9/11, see Joel J. Sokolsky, "Realism Canadian Style: National Security Policy and the Chrétien

Legacy," *Policy Matters*, June 2004 [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.policy.ca/policy-directory/Detailed/197.html>; Internet; accessed 6 February 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Harper, "Reviving Canadian Leadership in the World," Speech to the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Calgary, Alberta, 5 October 2006, linked from The Office of the Prime Minister Home Page at "Prime Minister attends Woodrow Wilson Awards Dinner" available from <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=2&id=1343>; Internet; accessed 13 November 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Defense & Foreign Affairs Institute, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Burney, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Harper, Address to The 61<sup>st</sup> Opening Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 21 September 2006, linked from The Office of the Prime Minister Home Page at "Media Centre/Speeches," available from <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=2&id=1329>; Internet; accessed 21 December 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Harper, "Reviving Canadian Leadership in the World", 4. Prime Minister Harper summarizes Canada's core values as follows; "We must be committed and capable of protecting our vital interests, projecting our values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and preserving balance and fairness in the international forums to which we belong."

<sup>19</sup> Burney, 4. Mr. Burney points out "that communication based on conviction is an essential leadership ingredient".

<sup>20</sup> Peter Mackay, "Why We Are There: Canadian Leadership in Afghanistan" Address to the Canadian International Council, Ottawa, Ontario, 19 October 2006, linked from the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Home Page at "About the Department/Media Room/Publications/ Speeches 2006/No. 2006/21," available from [http://w01.international.gc.ca/minpub/Publication.aspx?isRedirect=True&publication\\_id](http://w01.international.gc.ca/minpub/Publication.aspx?isRedirect=True&publication_id); Internet; accessed 21 December 2006. Minister Mackay explains in detail the security, democratic and humanitarian interests at stake for Canada with respect to the country's engagement in Afghanistan.

<sup>21</sup> Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 9. 'People who follow foreign policy issues more closely are more likely to have stronger opinions on foreign policy...of seven major foreign affairs topics...[surveyed in 2006]...Canadians paid the most attention to the military mission in Afghanistan...[but] were also broadly aware of most other foreign affairs stories tested.'

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Harper, "Reviving Canadian Leadership in the World", 6.

<sup>23</sup> See "NATO: The Test in Afghanistan," *The Economist* (25 November-1 December 2006): 12. "The Canadians, once devotees of softly-softly United Nations peacekeeping, spearheaded NATO's assault on entrenched Taliban fighters outside Kandahar in September."

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Harper, Address to The 61<sup>st</sup> Opening Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 2.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, Report to the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, United Nations 2004, paragraph 203, 66.

<sup>26</sup> See Harry R. Yarger, "Strategic Theory for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy," *The Letort Papers*, U.S. Army War College, (February 2006), 65. On the other hand, Yarger explains that at its core, "...strategy seeks to influence and shape the future environment *as opposed simply to reacting to it.*" [italics mine]

<sup>27</sup> Douglas Bland, "Time for a non-partisan Afghanistan policy," *The National Post*, 5 October 2006 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/editorialsletters/story.html?id=497dcf2f-d39b-4ffe>; Internet; accessed 5 October 2006.

<sup>28</sup> John Geddes, "Bullets Fly. Ottawa Ducks," *Maclean's*, 28 August 2006, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Weinberg, "Canada-9/11: An Increasingly Muddy Mission in Afghanistan," *Global News Network*, 11 September 2006: [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 29 December 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Editorial, "Canadians need to be told why we're at war," *Maclean's*, 28 August 2006, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Harper, "Reviving Canadian Leadership in the World", 2.

<sup>32</sup> In the course of this address Prime Minister Harper specifically identified the mission in Afghanistan as "one particular and key area where global interest and higher purpose come directly together" and he employed the mission as a backdrop to highlight Canada's leadership role, and as a path toward UN reform.

<sup>33</sup> Jeremy Kinsman, "In Afghanistan, NATO tests its relevance," *CBC News: Analysis & Viewpoint*, 4 December 2006 [journal on-line]; available from [http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp\\_kinsman/20061204.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_kinsman/20061204.html); Internet; accessed 4 December 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Jeremy Kinsman, "How to engage Beijing," *CBC News: Analysis & Viewpoint*, 18 November 2006 [journal on-line]; available from [http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp\\_kinsman/20061118.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/viewpoint/vp_kinsman/20061118.html); Internet; accessed 4 December 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Yarger, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Canada, *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy*, vi-xi. Canada's 'Core Security Interests' are defined as; protecting Canada and Canadians at home and abroad, ensuring Canada is not a base for threats to our allies, and, contributing to international security. The 'Key Areas' of focus are identified as; Intelligence, Emergency Planning and Management, Public Health, Transport [Marine] Security, Border Security, and, International Security.

<sup>37</sup> See David Jablonsky, "National Power," *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, (June 2006): 130-137. Dr. Jablonsky defines the Natural and Social determinates of National Power as; geography, population, natural resources, economic, military, political, psychological, and informational.

<sup>38</sup> Government of Canada, *Canada's International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World; Overview*, Forward from the Prime Minister.

<sup>39</sup> For a succinct description of 'Whole of Government' see remarks by Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan, David Sproule concerning the role of Canada's Strategic Advisory Team, a group of planners embedded within the Government of Afghanistan: "[w]orking closely with the Canadian Embassy, CIDA, DND and the Afghan Government, the team is an example of Canada's 'whole of government' concept." See David Sproule, "Governance, Rule of Law & Human Rights," linked from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Home Page at "Canada in the World/International Policy," available from <http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/library/governance-en.asp>; Internet; accessed 28 January 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Problems associated with the role of the Canadian International Development Agency in Afghanistan have been the subject of much criticism lately. See Lee Greenberg, "Minister visits Kabul, downplays concerns about progress of Canadian aid projects," *CanWest News Service*, 23 October 2006 [news service on-line]; available from <http://www.canada.com/components/print.aspx?id=3880fb84-805b-4f4c-993d-3673b748>; Internet; accessed 23 October 2006.

<sup>41</sup> See The Conference Board of Canada, "Mission Possible: Sustainable Prosperity for Canada," January 2007; available from <http://conferenceboard.ca/documents.asp?rnext=1886>; Internet. Volume 1 of this Canada Project Final Report illustrates the dynamic of a strategy formulation when it links the national objective of sustainable prosperity for Canada, with the ways of a two track critical foreign policy relationship with the United States, and key emerging powers, employing in the process the full range of national power as the means.

<sup>42</sup> Yarger, 6.

<sup>43</sup> The Federal Government 'Sponsorship Scandal' and its ensuing investigation and report by Mr Justice John Gomery in 2005, was a significant issue in the Canadian Federal Election late in that same year. For a comprehensive background see "CBC News In Depth: Federal Sponsorship Scandal," 1 November 2005; available from [http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/groupaction/gomeryreport\\_phaseone.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/groupaction/gomeryreport_phaseone.html); Internet.

<sup>44</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 397.

<sup>45</sup> The SENLIS Council, "An Assessment of the Hearts and Minds Campaign in Southern Afghanistan," Autumn 2006; available from <http://www.senliscouncil.net>; Internet; accessed 21 December 2006.

<sup>46</sup> The SENLIS Council, "The Taliban are winning the Hearts and Minds in Southern Afghanistan," *The SENLIS Council Media Centre-News Release*, 14 December 2006 [journal on-line]; available from [http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/media\\_centre/news\\_releases/76\\_news](http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/media_centre/news_releases/76_news); Internet; accessed 21 December 2006.

<sup>47</sup> The SENLIS Council, "An Assessment of the Hearts and Minds Campaign in Southern Afghanistan," iv.

<sup>48</sup> For an explanation of the problems encountered by Canada's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar Province, as well as a sense of the disproportion amongst contributing

government departments (DND-military; 330 [including the PRT leader], CIVPOL; 5, CIDA; 3, DFAIT; 1, as at 15 December 2006), see John Geddes, "How to Win the War," *Maclean's*, 1 January 2007, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, 397.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003), 106.

<sup>51</sup> In addition to the extraordinary efforts made by the Canadian Government in the fall of 2006 to inform the Canadian public of the objectives of the Afghan mission, a similar situation is pending with respect to potential Canadian participation in the US Ballistic Missile Defence Program. See Government of Canada, The Standing Committee on National Security and Defence, *Managing Turmoil: The Need to Upgrade Canadian Foreign Aid and Military Strength to Deal with Massive Change*, Thirty-Ninth Parliament, First Session, 5 October 2006, 80. Also see Editorial, "Time to rethink the missile defense snub," *Maclean's*, 23 October 2006, 2.

